

Power Has Limits

Read how the Constitution and Bill of Rights protect people from unfair national power.

SS.5.CG.3.2 "Analyze how the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights limit the power of the national government and protect citizens from an oppressive government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each sentence that describes a limit on the national government. Circle the words that name a right or a check, so you can see how citizens are protected.

Rules for National Power

- ① When national leaders make laws, they do not have unlimited power. The Constitution divides national power among Congress, the president, and the federal courts. Congress writes laws, the president can veto bills, and courts can decide whether laws follow the Constitution. This system of checks and balances makes it harder for one person or group to control the whole government.
- ② Suppose Congress passes a law requiring every newspaper to get government approval before printing criticism of national leaders. A president who dislikes criticism might support the law. However, the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights protects freedom of speech and freedom of the press. A federal court could rule that the law violates those protections, so the government could not enforce it.
- ③ The Bill of Rights also protects people accused of crimes. The Fourth Amendment guards people against unreasonable searches and seizures. The Fifth Amendment says the government must use fair legal steps and cannot take private property for public use without just compensation. These rights do not stop all government action. Instead, they require national officials to follow rules that protect citizens from unfair treatment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How do checks and balances make it harder for one person or group to control the national government?

2 How would the First Amendment limit Congress's newspaper approval law?

3 If a federal court rules that the newspaper law violates the First Amendment, what would happen?

4 Name two protections in the third paragraph. What must the national government do or not do because of each one?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write 3 or 4 sentences about an unfair action the national government might try to take. Explain which protection or check from the passage would limit that action and what the government would have to do.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each sentence that describes a limit on the national government. Circle the words that name a right or a check, so you can see how citizens are protected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do checks and balances make it harder for one person or group to control the national government?	The Constitution gives powers to Congress, the president, and the federal courts. Each branch can limit the others, making it harder for one person or group to control the government.
2	How would the First Amendment limit Congress's newspaper approval law?	The First Amendment protects freedom of speech and freedom of the press. It would limit Congress because the law would require government approval before newspapers could print criticism.
3	If a federal court rules that the newspaper law violates the First Amendment, what would happen?	The national government could not enforce the law.
4	Name two protections in the third paragraph. What must the national government do or not do because of each one?	The Fourth Amendment protects against unreasonable searches and seizures, so the government cannot make unreasonable searches or seizures. The Fifth Amendment requires fair legal steps and just compensation when private property is taken for public use.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

National agents begin entering homes without a reason to look for banned books. The Fourth Amendment limits this action because it protects people from unreasonable searches. A federal court could decide that the searches violate the Constitution, and the national government would have to stop them.

Accept accurate explanations that connect a constitutional check or a Bill of Rights protection to a limit on national government power. In Part 3, accept varied unfair actions if the student correctly explains a protection or check from the passage and its result.